

what is most needed is more time, more liberty, more peace for the individual student and teacher to develop his own interests, ideas and techniques *as he matures*. Silence and solitude can do more for continuous learning than can the cult of incessant communication.

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**Humanism and Politics.** By Albert William Levi. (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1969. Pp. 498. \$15.00.)

This book is a response to an urgent need. Professor Levi argues that our civilization is on the edge of an abyss which threatens to swallow up the works of Proust, Picasso, Wallace Stevens, and Stravinsky just as it did those of Menander. Auschwitz and Hiroshima are the warnings, and the author reminds us again and again, lest we forget, of the stakes for which he is playing. Although our situation is such as to have induced the despair and withdrawal from political involvement of Martin Heidegger and Norman Mailer, this is a temptation which must be avoided, for we can be saved, Levi says, only by the intervention of the humanistic imagination.

Science, with its technological barbarism and merely manipulative social branch, can offer us no help, says Levi, and he quickly dismisses it. Only humanism offers a resource because it is the endeavor which can be defined as "the quest for value" (p. 15). It assumes "not only the existence of standards of value which are not merely arbitrary, but the human freedom to commit oneself to values through an act of the will" (p. 17). He does not, however, give us much indication of what the nonarbitrary values are or how they are arrived at. Happily, though, one can catch glimpses of Professor Levi's views in the course of the book—man must always care for man and avoid his reduction to thingness or to brutishness as well as his transcendence of man. He steers carefully between the Scylla of behavioralism and the Charybdis of religion. Some of his imperatives might read: Thou shalt not serve the military-industrial complex (a commandment broken by Herman Kahn). Thou shalt not admire a political assassin who is not willing to die himself (a commandment obeyed by Camus).

The specific task of this book, which Professor Levi seems to understand as an act of humanistic beneficence to politics, is to investigate the relation to politics of humanists from Erasmus to Hochhuth. The fundamental distinction is between those who get involved and those

who do not. For example, Erasmus did not get involved, but Montaigne did; Goethe did not really care, but Schiller did. These essays are filled with much nice detail, summations of the spirits of ages and anecdotes about the lives of the large cast of characters. Professor Levi assures us that he could have begun with Socrates, but that would have been to overextend his "canvas," which is already of proportions that would put Veronese to shame.

These essays, however unconnected they may appear, actually convey a general impression of a subtle humanistic strategy. After the quick tour of Renaissance humanists, we are introduced to the "great refusal," the turning away from politics practiced by many great humanists, particularly German. Levi tells us they were good men because they were humanists, but they, Goethe in particular, did not fulfill their potential for good works to mankind at large. Goethe in some way is responsible for Auschwitz, for he did not engage. Thomas Mann was another who refused engagement but who later changed his mind. And we know that he gave up a rightwing sentimental cultural snobbishness for the politics of the left. As Professor Levi puts it, "... Lukács urged on the regenerate Thomas Mann that at the heart of his intellectual and moral life, he should replace the tradition which runs: Goethe-Schopenhauer-Wagner-Nietzsche with another which runs: Lessing-Goethe-Hölderlin-Büchner-Heine-Marx" (p. 418). The point is that all humanists must be engaged; the refusal leads to Nazism or the like; and when any true humanist does engage, he must do so on the side of the humanitarian left, for that is all that a humanist could do. He must also be a cosmopolitan, for nationalism, it seems, almost inevitably leads to positions like those held by Treitschke, of whom Levi presents a sinister portrait.

The left which we must join in order to be useful humanists is the Marxist left. Marx, we learn, cannot be opposed any more than can Descartes. Even in disagreeing with him, we are agreeing with him. He constitutes our historic ambience. The issue is not whether to accept Marx but how to interpret him. Therefore, it follows that the last half of the book, and more, is devoted to the postures of various humanists with regard to Communism, except for a stop to annihilate Herman Kahn who represents science which is responsible for Hiroshima and the Cold War. Picasso, Brecht, Pasternak, Camus, Sartre, Merleau Ponty, and Lukács are looked at. The existentialists mentioned are all members of Sartre's circle and

their thought treated as a footnote to Marxism.

At all of this, one might wonder whether Stalin's Russia was more open to a humanist's values than was Hitler's Germany. This is a difficult point. Professor Levi knows that Stalin was not nice, but for him the experience with Stalin does not have the same absolute value that the experience with Hitler did. Somehow, humanism is not excluded by it. Thus Goethe's stance toward politics foreshadows Hitler, but Marx's possible connection with Stalin is not even hinted at; hence, humanist activism hardly seems a danger. Herman Kahn is *prime facie* corrupt because he worked for the Rand Corporation, but Berthold Brecht who accepted Stalin Prizes and put the money in Swiss banks was merely exercising peasant canniness in preserving the freedom of the artist; those humanists who supported and praised Stalin receive no blame, or else their little failings are buried under sociological or psychological explanation.

Professor Levi is suggesting a transnational, even a transpolitical, politics, peopled by "humanists" with special privilege but committed to the proletarian cause. Regimes are indifferent; one does not have to study that sort of thing; whichever has more "humanism" is best. This allows a dialogue across the opposing regimes with Marxists from bourgeois societies politely disagreeing with Marxists from Communist societies about the interpretation of Marx. Marxism has been freed from party rigidity, and the success of this endeavor is vouchsafed by the stunning flowering of humanism in Yugoslavia. This is the perfect ideology for the cultural congresses in pleasant Eastern European resorts (p. 342 ff.), and it allows one to play the conscience to both decadent bourgeois societies and intolerant people's democracies which misinterpret Marx's humanism.

The achievement of this book, the political central segment of a monumental trilogy, is to reduce to nothingness the gap separating philosophy from journalism.

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**The Works of Joseph de Maistre.** Selected, translated, and introduced by Jack Lively; foreword by Robert Nisbet. (New York: Schocken Books, 1971. Pp. 303. \$3.95.)

A few years ago, surely, no political thinker would have seemed more irrelevant to the present condition of society—in the eyes of the typical educated American—than Joseph de Maistre. Ultramontanist politics had become anti-

quarian merely; even the royal house of Savoy, which Maistre served with distinction, had gone down to dusty death. Yet Jack Lively (of the University of Sussex) took Maistre very seriously when this useful volume of selections was first published in 1965; and that influential sociologist Robert Nisbet, in his foreword to this new paperback edition, finds Maistre worth comparing with Plato and Hobbes—for good reason.

The powerful intellect of Maistre, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, stood in opposition to the Age of Reason. In the closing decades of the twentieth century, much of the rising generation sets its face against political and moral Rationalism—if more on the principles of Rousseau than on those of Maistre. Once more people seek, as Maistre sought, for an enduring principle of order: some principle quite different from the liberal order of the past two centuries. So it is that the conservative arguments of Maistre regain significance.

"Where the liberals and radicals of their day saw the *new order* rising like a phoenix from the ashes of the old regime," Professor Nisbet writes in his foreword, "the conservatives saw not the new order but the *new disorder*—one that they declared would be the permanent condition of man so long as the values of individualism, secularism, progress, and mass democracy prevailed" (pp. xv–xvi). That principle of order, Maistre (though no theocrat) found in obedience to God's design. The study of history, rather than of philosophy, is the proper discipline of politics.

Mr. Lively selects many of the more important sections and passages from Maistre's *Considerations on France*, *Study on Sovereignty*, *The Pope*, *Essay on the Generative Principle of Political Constitutions*, *The Saint Petersburg Dialogues*, and *Enlightenment on Sacrifices*. The character of these writings is so foreign to the tendency of political belief in America and Britain during the past two centuries that Maistre now has an exotic charm; some readers will be impelled to consult the sources at greater length.

In his perceptive and impartial introduction, Jack Lively traces the opposition—and the similarities—between Maistre and Rousseau, on the one hand, and between Maistre and Hume, on the other. These three political philosophers had this in common, that they denied the authority of a complacent rationalism, and discovered in intuition, moral sentiments, and custom the enduring bonds of society. For understanding in modern context such criticism of the Enlightenment's basic assumptions, it may